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ABSTRACT

This document states that many studies have identified faculty recruitment as a specific job responsibility of college department chairs. Because the recruitment process is time consuming and costly, the chair must also ensure that recruitment leads to retention. This paper closely examines what strategies academic chairs use to recruit and retain faculty. This study sent a survey questionnaire to department heads at a community college in the southeastern United States. The data were based on 21 returned surveys (from a total of 25 sent out), which asked 4 questions concerning recruitment and retention of faculty: (1) What is the process of faculty recruitment? (2) What are the current measures utilized to retain newly hired faculty members? (3) What are the perceived challenges related to faculty recruitment? and (4) What are the perceived challenges related to faculty retention? The questions provided opportunities for open-ended responses. Word of mouth, local newspaper ads, and professional journal advertisements ranked as the top three in the frequency of recruitment methods ranking. In the frequency of retention methods ranking, the top three methods used were on-campus faculty development, mentoring programs, and workload flexibility. The top three perceived challenges to faculty recruitment were fiscal restraints, qualified applicants, and program quality. Finally, the top three perceived challenges to retention were financial resources, faculty workload, and technology impact. (Contains 22 references.) (NB)

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Faculty Recruitment and Retention: A Case Study of the Chair's Role

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Title: Faculty Recruitment and Retention: A Case Study of the Chair's Role

Abstract: Faculty quality, to a large extent, determines institutional quality. Department chairs, as the front-line of college administration, play an important role in the hiring and retention of faculty, and subsequently, rely on a variety of skills and response strategies to deal with these tasks. Using a single case-study institution located in the southeastern United States, department chairs responded to a survey, identify fiscal constraints as the most serious impediments to both recruitment and retention tasks. On campus faculty development was identified as the predominant form of retention activity, and mentoring by other faculty members was identified as the most effective form of retention.

As early as 1981, studies related to the roles and responsibilities of department chairs identified faculty recruitment and retention as a specific job responsibility (Brass, 1984). Seagren, Creswell, and Wheeler (1993) identified faculty recruitment and retention as one of the key issues which academic chairs will face in the future. Academic chairs during the past ten years have been expected to perform in an increasingly complex, diverse, and changing environment, with ever-increasing expectations from the institution and the faculty (Seagren, et al., 1993). There is no indication in practice or in the literature base that this trend should or will change in the future.

Particularly important is the necessity that the chair ensures that recruitment leads to retention. The recruitment process is not only time consuming, but also economically taxing; therefore, a selection that is not retained is wasteful and frustrating for all involved (Lucas, 1994). Finding a good match between individual and organizational requirements is crucial. According to Kouzes and Posner (1987), people (faculty) tend to "drift" when they do not have clear, concise understanding of role expectations. The academic chair must provide ample time during the recruitment process to evaluate the congruency between the candidate's expectations and the institutions expectations.

Once a faculty member is recruited, it becomes a major role of the chair to ensure that a supportive environment in which to succeed is created (Creswell, Wheeler, Seagren, Egly, & Beyer, 1990). Boice (1991) reported that novice faculty have feelings of uncertainty related to their role expectations. The academic chair's role in promoting faculty development has been viewed by Hammond and Fong (1988) as the most important predicator of a person's sense of accomplishment. Lucas (1994) acknowledged

the challenge to academic chairs in implementing such an environment and suggested communication and empowerment as tools to meet this goal.

Given the critical nature of faculty recruitment and retention, its impact on the chair's multiple roles, as well as the needs of the institution, it is appropriate to more closely examine what interventions academic chairs implement to recruit and retain faculty. Chairs' perceptions of the challenges they encounter related to the recruitment and retention process can also provide insight into the process of bringing and keeping new faculty on campus. Utilizing a case study method, the current study provides an in-depth examination of one comprehensive community college in the southeastern United States.

Background of the Study

The literature on the department chair is substantial, especially in regards to cataloging and conceptualizing responsibilities, tasks, and roles (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993; Seagren et al, 1993; Sledge, 1997). These reports consistently indicate that the academic department head holds an important role in institutional decision-making (Kirkpatrick, 1994). Bennett and Fiquli (1990) went so far as to describe the chair as the custodian of academic integrity, chairs have been reported to be responsible for up to 80% of all academic decisions made on campus (Roach, 1976). Seagren and Creswell (1985), however, noted that administrative tasks vary by college size and mission, with, for example, state college chairs viewing their tasks more broadly than university chairs.

Smart and Hamm (1993) conducted one of a growing number of studies on the community college department chair, finding that a comprehensive institutional mission was identified as a significant variable in determining organizational effectiveness for

departments. Consistent with the chair serving as a catalyst for conveying an institutional message, Opp and Smith (1994) reported that 55% of all Hispanic, 52% of Native American, and 42% of African American college students are enrolled in community colleges, and that promotion, acceptance, and responding to diversity becomes the responsibility of the department chair as the front line of academic administration. The concept was also argued by Drapeau (1991) who noted that it is a necessity for chairs to develop a way to help faculty and students become contributing members of a culturally diverse society.

Miller and Seagren (1997) reported that community college department chairs identify financial resources as their most important challenge, yet Miles (1983), over a decade earlier, reported the broad base of curricular oversight, recruitment, budgeting, personnel, faculty development, student affairs, and other external responsibilities as the overriding concern for chairs. Miles also reported, however, that a third of all chairs found little to no satisfaction in serving as chair, and that they would not accept the position again.

Eisen (1997) studied the process of serving as chair, particularly patterns of interaction between internal and external constituencies that involve the chair. Five patterns of interaction were ultimately identified, including caretaker, harmonizer, politician, first-among-equals, and initiator. The findings indicated that no single pattern of interaction was exclusive, but instead, have commonalties and overlapping components.

This body of knowledge about chairs, however, does little to further the practical application of chair strategies for effectively recruiting and retaining departmental

faculty. Consistently identified were the tasks of personnel management and roles of mentoring. The current study intended expand on this baseline knowledge and to identify further the depth of chair strategies.

The case study institution used was a public comprehensive community college located in the southeastern United States. The fully accredited institution was part of a larger, 20+-campus community college system that made use of both a system-wide governance board and a local governing board. The college offered both core courses that could be transferred to a four-year institution and programs designed for the preparation of students for immediate entry into the local workforce. The college enrolled 1,964 full-time equivalent students in the semester of study, including 1,378 who were self-classified as commuters and 586 who made use of campus residence facilities.

Research Methods

Identification of how and why questions provide the focus of a case study, and broadly, this type of research provides parameters to a single situation, place, or event (Yin, 1994). An advantage to the case study method is the depth to which a limited number of individuals, institutions, or groups is being investigated (Polit-O'Hara, 1987). A challenge to the researcher utilizing a case study approach is the need to remain objective despite familiarity with the subject matter. Through the use of a questionnaire in the current study as compared to an observational technique, this criterion was addressed.

The case study institution had divisions of allied health, natural science and mathematics, social science and physical education, learning support, business, and humanities, and these divisions were divided into 19 departments with corresponding

heads. A total of 25 academic chairs and department heads were included in the case study survey.

A survey questionnaire format was utilized to address the purpose of the study related to faculty recruitment and retention, and afforded participants an opportuni'y for open-ended comments. Case studies are structured to elicit details from the viewpoint of participants (Stake, 1995). Surveys were distributed through the vice president for academic affairs utilizing campus-mailing services.

The survey questionnaire was composed of four questions related to faculty recruitment and retention. The first question focused on the process of faculty recruitment. Common recruitment practices ascertained from the literature were listed for identification s a used technique by department heads. The second question focused on current measures utilized to retain newly hired faculty members as supported by the literature. Both of these questions provided opportunities for unstructured, open-ended comments related to faculty recruitment and retention practices.

The third and fourth questions sought to add to the current two-year college literature base by addressing perceived challenges to the roles and responsibilities of department heads related to faculty recruitment and retention. The third question therefore focused on perceived challenges related to faculty recruitment. Respondents were asked to rank order their perception of challenges at the college. And the fourth question focused on perceived challenges related to faculty retention. Respondents were asked to rank order their perception of faculty retention challenges at the case study college. The survey was reviewed for face-validity and reliability by both independent scholars and case study institution administration.

With the relatively small sample size, a letter of support from the vice president for academic affairs, and the cooperative nature of the campus, a response rate at or near 100% was anticipated. Some follow-up due to timing was initially projected, an , was handled through reminder telephone calls to the department heads.

Findings

Returned surveys included 21 questionnaires and an additional two that were determined to be unusable due to missing or incomplete data. An additional two surveys were returned with the notation that the corresponding chair had no responsibilities for faculty recruitment or retention.

Responding chairs indicated that of the printed advertising options, professional journals (61.9%) and local newspaper advertisements (66.76%) were utilized most often, with professional newsletters (33.3%) were the least likely to be used in the recruitment process. Other printed options cited by respondents included the Chronicle of Higher Education (33%), alumni placement bulletins, and the university system's clearinghouse. With the exception of the Division of Business, all divisions reported, with greatest frequency, word of mouth was the most popular (76.2%) form of recruitment (see Table 1).

Respondents identified, from those processes listed, the methods they perceived to be the most effective in the recruitment process. Other printed materials, which included the Chronicle of Higher Education, alumni placement bulletins, and the university system clearinghouse were perceived to be the most effective forms of recruitment (mean ranking 1.4).

On-campus faculty development (71.4%) was cited by respondents as the most popular method used to retain faculty. Mentoring (61.9%) and workload flexibility (61.9%) ranked as the next most utilized methods for faculty retention. Off-campus faculty development (57.14%) and structured orientation (57.14%) were cited as the least frequently utilized method to retain faculty (see Table 2).

A mentoring program (mean ranking 1.50), other, which included methods such as personal involvement, team building, inclusiveness, merit raises, social interaction, and structured orientation (mean ranking 1.50) ranked as the top methods which were perceived most effective in faculty retention. Faculty development (mean ranking 2.23) ranked second in the methods perceived most effective in retaining faculty.

Respondents were requested to rank order 1-7 the challenges listed with 1 being the greatest perceived challenge to faculty recruitment at the case study community college and 7 being the least challenging. Fiscal constraints (mean raking 2.23) was listed, as the greatest perceived challenge to faculty recruitment. The availability of qualified applicants (mean ranking 2.58) was listed as next greatest perceived challenge. Maintaining program quality (3.23), recruitment process (3.88), external accrediting requirements (4.76), accommodation of cultural diversity (5.05), and promotion of gender equity (5.23) rounded out the categories (see Table 3).

Respondents were also requested to rank order 1-7 the challenges listed with 1 being the greatest perceived challenge to faculty retention and 7 being the least challenging. Financial resources were again ranked as the greatest challenge to faculty retention reported by respondents (2.35). Faculty workload (2.5), technology impact (3.28), faculty development (4.28), professional development for senior faculty (4.71),

faculty evaluations (5.07), and motivating faculty (6.28) were identified as other perceived obstacles (see Table 4).

Discussion

Community colleges continue to be a major component of the critical, national debate about effective delivery of higher education to the general population. As a significant component of the broad higher education picture, attention must be given to the elements that make community colleges perform well. Few argue that the quality of faculty is a dominant criterion in establishing the quality of an institution. With such emphasis placed on faculty, the process of hiring and retaining them becomes of paramount institutional importance. The literature base confirms that an important aspect of department chair duties relates to serving the needs, cultivating, and fostering the work of faculty. Specifically, chairs have self-identified a responsibility for the recruitment and retention of their faculty, although, authors profiling responsibilities, tasks, and duties, have not explored the methods and strategies for accomplishing this task. Further, the need for a strong, well-trained faculty base, looming faculty shortages, and heightened competition for an educated workforce have precipitated a more comprehensive and strategic understanding of community college recruitment and retention.

Data from the case study institution reveals some consistencies and inconsistencies in how department chairs see and do their job. For example, chairs saw their greatest challenge in both recruitment and retention being related to fiscal constraints or monetary issues. This could be a question of non-competitive salaries or benefit packages, or, it could be related to a lack of money to recruit potential faculty.

Chairs viewed on-campus faculty development as the most frequent form of retention activity, but saw the most effective as peer mentoring. Similarly, professional journals and local newspaper advertisements were reported as the most commonly used form of faculty recruitment, but "other printed materials," such as alumni placement bulletins and the Chronicle of Higher Education as the most effective.

These inconsistencies could reflect the institutional phenomenon of tradition or a view of the job search as "the way it has always been," but could also be a function of human resource administration guidelines. This rationale is one dimension of further research that is important for community colleges in general and department chairs in specific. A second dimension to further inquiry could be tied to matching the uniqueness of student characteristics to faculty development and retention issues. Community college students typically do not resemble the image of a traditional college student, and these unique characteristics may have bearing on the type of faculty member hired in a community college and the types of activities that are meaningful for development.

This initial investigation into department chair activities to recruit and retain faculty is a first-step in further understanding the complexities of community colleges. Further research is needed and encouraged, and should approach the task of faculty development and recruitment from a holistic perspective where chairs and faculty can speak equally about what they think works, what the desired outcomes and intentions are, and what can enhance an institution's ability to attract first-class faculty.

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Table 1
Frequency of recruitment methods ranking, percentages, and mean effectiveness ranking

Advertising Category	Frequency of Use ranking N=21	Percentage of use	Mean Effectiveness ranking
Word of mouth	16	76.19%	2.23
Local newspaper ad	14	66.67	1.84
Professional journal ad	13	61.90	1.44
National newspaper ad	8	38.10	1.71
Professional newsletter ad	7	33.33	2.50
Other printed ad	7	33.33	1.33
Employment agency	5	23.81	1.50
Flyers, professional meetings	4	19.05	2.50
Teleconferencing	0	0.00	0.00

Table 2
Frequency of retention methods, ranking, percentages, and mean effectiveness ranking

Advertising Category	Frequency of Use ranking N=21	Percentage of use	Mean Effectiveness ranking
On-campus faculty development	15	71.43	2.23
Mentoring programs	13	61.90	1.50
Workload flexibility	13	61.90	2.25
Off-campus faculty development	12	57.14	2.23
Structure orientation	12	57.14	1.50
Other*	6	28.57	1.50

*Other includes the total of the reponses to the following: personal involvement, team building, intellectual stimulation, general working conditions, informal orientation and mentoring, departmental guidance, inclusiveness, merit raises, help with locating housing, participation in social occasions, and individual special occasion recognition.

Table 3
Perceived challenges related to faculty recruitment

Recruitment Challenge	Range	Mean Ranking
Fiscal constraints	4	2.23
Qualified applicants	5	2.58
Program quality	6	3.29
Recruitment process	6	3.88
External accrediting requirements	7	5.00
Cultural diversity	7	5.05
Gender equity	3	5.70

Table 4

Perceived challenges related to faculty retention

Retention Challenge	Range	Mean Ranking
Financial resources	4	2.35
Faculty workload	6	2.50
Technology impact	6	3.28
Faculty development	5	4.28
Senior faculty professional development	5	4.71
Faculty evaluations	4	5.07
Motivating faculty	5	6.28